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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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09/904,471

07/13/2001

Robert R. DeWitt

0412-P02404US0

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7590

01/24/2008

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EXAMINER

WU, RUTAO

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3628

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

01/24/2008

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 09/904,471	Applicant(s) DEWITT ET AL.	
	Examiner ROB WU	Art Unit 3628	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 31 October 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-5,8-13,17,18,29 and 31-69 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-5,8-13,17,18,29 and 31-69 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims 1, 3, 4, 10, 13, 31-35, 39, 42-46, 48-55, 57 and 59-69 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pub No. 2001/0034608 to Gendreau.

Referring to claim 1:

An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:

A transport for conveying mail along a transport path; (Fig 1), [0022]

A scale positioned along the transport path for weighing the pieces of mail;

[0022]

An imaging station positioned along the transport path for scanning the pieces of mail to obtain image data for the mail to determine address information of the recipients of the pieces; [0022], [0032]

A labeler positioned along the transport path for applying labels to the mail;

[0034]

A processor operable to determine postal information for a piece of mail in response to the determined address information and weight of the piece of mail; [0033]

A printer operable to print the determined information onto the label for the piece; [0034] and

A sorter for sorting mailpieces in response to the determined address information and weight. [0035]

Referring to claim 3:

The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the imaging station comprises a line scan camera for scanning the piece of mail at a plurality of discrete points to create a set of image data representative of at least a portion of the piece of mail. [0032], [0033]

Referring to claim 4:

The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the imaging station comprises an imaging computer for processing the image data to determine the address information. [0032]

Referring to claim 10:

The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the transport comprises a roller bed for conveying the pieces of mail in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 13:

A method for processing mail, comprising the steps of:

Scanning a piece of mail to determine address information for the recipient; [0022], [0032]

Conveying the piece of mail to a scale; (Fig 1), [0022]

Weighing the piece; [0022]

Determining the appropriate postal information based on the determined address information and the determined weight of the piece; [0033]

Adhering a label onto the piece; [0034]

Printing postal information on the label; [0034] and

Sorting the piece of mail in response to the determined address information and the determined weight. [0035]

Referring to claim 29:

The apparatus of claim 1 comprising a sorter for sorting a piece of mail into one of a plurality of bins in response to the determined weight for the piece. [0035], [0048]

Referring to claim 31:

An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:

A transport for conveying mail along a path; (Fig 1), [0022]

A scale positioned along the path for weighing the pieces of mail; [0022]

A scanner positioned along the transport path for scanning the pieces of mail to obtain image data for the mail to determine address information of the recipients of the pieces; [0022]

A labeler positioned along the transport path for applying labels to the pieces of mail; [0034]

A processor operable to determine postage information for a piece of mail in response to the weight of the piece of mail; [0033]

A printer operable to print the determined postage information onto the label for the piece; [0034] and

A sorter operable to sort the piece of mail into one of a plurality of bins based on the weight of the piece of mail [0035]

Referring to claim 32:

The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the processor determines the postage information in response to the determined recipient's address information and the weight of the piece. [0033]

Referring to claim 33:

The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the sorter is operable to sort the piece of mail based on the weight of the piece of mail and the address information for the recipient of the piece of mail. [0035]

Referring to claim 34:

The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the scanner comprises a line scan camera for scanning the piece of mail at a plurality of discrete points to create a set of image data representative of at least a portion of the piece of mail. [0032], [0033]

Referring to claim 35:

The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the scanner comprises an imaging computer for processing the image data to determine the recipient of the piece. [0032]

Referring to claim 39:

The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the transport is configured to transport the pieces of mail in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 42:

An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:

A transport for conveying mail along a path; (Fig 1), [0022]

A scale positioned along the path for weighing the pieces of mail; [0022]

A scanner positioned along the transport path for scanning the pieces of mail to determine address information of the recipients of the pieces; [0022], [0032]

A labeler positioned along the transport path for selectively applying labels to the pieces of mail; [0034]

A processor operable to selectively determine postage information for a piece of mail in response to the weight of the piece of mail; [0033] and

A printer operable to selectively print the determined postage information onto the label for the piece. [0034]

Referring to claim 43:

The apparatus of claim 42 comprising a sorter operable to sort the piece of mail into one of a plurality of bins based on the weight of the piece of mail. [0035], [0048]

Referring to claim 44:

The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the processor is operable to selectively determine the postage information for the piece of mail in response to the recipient of the piece of mail. [0033]

Referring to claim 45:

A method for processing mail, comprising the steps of:

Scanning a piece of mail to determine the recipient; [0022], [0032]

Conveying the piece of mail along a transport path to a scale; [0022]

Weighing the piece; [0022]

Determining the postage information for the piece based on the determined weight of the piece; [0033]

Conveying the piece along the transport path to a labeler; (Fig 1)

Adhering a label onto the piece; [0034]

Conveying the piece along the transport path to a printer; (Fig 1)

Printing the determined postage information on the label; [0034]

Conveying the piece along the transport path to a sorter; [0035] and

Sorting the piece into one of a plurality of bins based on the weight of the piece.

[0035]

Referring to claim 46:

The method of claim 45 wherein the step of determining the appropriate postage comprises determining the appropriate postage based on the determined address and the determined weight of the piece. [0033]

Referring to claim 48:

A method for processing mail, comprising the steps of:

Scanning a piece of mail to determine the recipient; [0022], [0032]

Conveying the piece of mail along a transport path to a scale; [0022]

Weighing the piece; [0022]

Determining the postage information for the piece based on the determined weight of the piece; [0033]

Conveying the piece along the transport path to a labeler; [0034]

Adhering a label onto the piece; [0034]

Conveying the piece along the transport path to a sorter; [0035] and

Sorting the piece into one of a plurality of bins based on the weight of the piece
[0035]

Referring to claim 49:

The method of claim 48 comprising the step printing the postage information on
the label. [0034]

Referring to claim 50:

The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the transport is configured to convey a batch of
mixed mail of various heights and thicknesses [0037], [0039]

Referring to claim 51:

The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the transport is a substantially horizontal
transport configured to convey the mail pieces to the imaging station in a substantially
horizontal orientation, (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 52:

The method of claim 13 comprising the step of providing a batch of mixed mail
having pieces of various size. [0037], [0039]

Referring to claim 53:

The method of claim 13 wherein the step of conveying comprises conveying the
piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 54:

The method of claim 53 wherein the step of adhering a label comprises
displacing the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation to a labeler and

adhering a label to the piece of mail while the piece of mail is in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 55:

The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the transport comprises a generally horizontal surface configured to receive and convey mail pieces in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 57:

The apparatus of claim 42 wherein the transport comprises a generally horizontal surface configured to receive and convey mail pieces in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 59:

The method of claim 45 comprising the step of providing a batch of mixed mail having pieces of various size. [0037], [0039]

Referring to claim 60:

The method of claim 45 wherein the step of conveying comprises conveying the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 61:

The method of claim 60 wherein the step of adhering a label comprises displacing the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation to a labeler and adhering a label to the piece of mail while the piece of mail is in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 62:

The method of claim 48 comprising the step of providing a batch of mixed mail having pieces of various size. [0037], [0039]

Referring to claim 63:

The method of claim 48 wherein the step of conveying comprises conveying the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 64:

The method of claim 63 wherein the step of adhering a label comprises displacing the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation to a labeler and adhering a label to the piece of mail while the piece of mail is in a generally horizontal orientation wherein the step of adhering comprises vertically displacing a label toward the piece of mail. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 65:

An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:

A transport configured for convey mail in a generally horizontal orientation along a path; (Fig 1)

A scale positioned along the path for weighing the pieces of mail; [0022]

A scanner positioned along the transport path for scanning the pieces of mail to determine address information of the recipients of the pieces; [0022], [0032]

A labeler positioned along the transport path for selectively applying labels to the pieces of mail; [0034] and

A processor operable to selectively determine postal information for a piece of mail in response to the weight of the piece of mail. [0033]

Referring to claim 66:

The apparatus of claim 65 wherein the processor is operable to determine the postal information for the piece in response to the weight and the determined address information. [0033]

Referring to claim 67:

The apparatus of claim 65 wherein the labeler is configured to receive the piece of mail in a generally horizontal orientation and apply the label in a generally horizontal orientation. (Fig 1)

Referring to claim 68:

The apparatus of claim 65 comprising a sorter for sorting the piece of mail into one of a plurality of bins based on the weight or determine address information. [0034]

Referring to claim 69:

The apparatus of claim 65 comprising a sorter for sorting the piece of mail in response to the determined postal information. [0035]

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 5, 8, 11, 12, 17, 36, 37, 40 and 41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gendreau in view of U.S. Pat No. 7,060,926 to Edmonds.

Referring to claim 5:

Gendreau disclose that the address information is read by an imaging device [0032]. Gendreau does not expressly disclose that the imaging device utilizing OCR to determine the address and the Zipcode of the recipient of the piece, and the piece is rejected if the determined address and Zipcode do not properly correlate. Edmonds disclose using an OCR system to read the address on mailpieces (col 1: lines 62-64) and if the address cannot be read then the mail piece is rejected. (col 2 lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to utilize OCR with the imaging device to read the address information on the mailpiece and to reject the mailpiece if the address and zipcode do not match. Gendreau would be motivated to do so because OCR is well known in the arts for reading address information from mailpieces and to ensure that the address information on the mailpiece is correct to properly calculate shipping charges.

Referring to claim 8:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a reject bin for receiving pieces for which the recipient's address is not determined. Edmonds discloses that if the OCR reads an incorrect barcode, the letter is then rejected by the OCR. (col 2: lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to reject a mailpiece if incorrect information is shown on the mailpiece. Gendreau would be motivated to perform such step to ensure that the shipping costs for the mailpieces can be determined properly.

Referring to claim 11:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a verifier operable to scan the pieces and determine whether the postal information was properly printed. However, Edmonds disclose that if the OCR cannot read the address, then the letter is rejected. (col 2: lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to verify whether the postal information was properly printed. Gendreau would be motivated to do so to ensure that the delivery cost can be correctly calculated.

Referring to claim 12:

Gendreau disclose wherein the verifier comprises a line scan camera for scanning the pieces of mail at a plurality of discrete points to create image data representative of at least a portion of the pieces of mail. [0037]

Referring to claim 17:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose scanning the printed postal information to verify that the postal information was properly printed. However, Edmonds disclose that if the OCR cannot read the address, then the letter is rejected. (col 2: lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to verify whether the postal information was properly printed. Gendreau would be motivated to do so to ensure that the delivery cost can be correctly calculated.

Referring to claim 36:

Gendreau disclose that the address information is read by an imaging device [0032]. Gendreau does not expressly disclose that the imaging device utilizing OCR to determine the address and the Zipcode of the recipient of the piece, and the piece is rejected if the determined address and Zipcode do not properly correlate. Edmonds disclose using an OCR system to read the address on mailpieces (col 1: lines 62-64) and if the address cannot be read then the mail piece is rejected. (col 2 lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to utilize OCR with the imaging device to read the address information on the mailpiece and to reject the mailpiece if the address and zipcode do not match. Gendreau would be motivated to do so because OCR is well known in the arts for reading address information from mailpieces and to ensure that the address information on the mailpiece is correct to properly calculate shipping charges.

Referring to claim 37:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a reject bin for receiving pieces for which the recipient's address is not determined. Edmonds discloses that if the OCR reads an incorrect barcode, the letter is then rejected by the OCR. (col 2: lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to reject a mailpiece if incorrect information is shown on the mailpiece. Gendreau would be motivated to perform such step to ensure that the shipping costs for the mailpieces can be determined properly.

Referring to claim 40:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a verifier operable to scan the pieces and determine whether the postal information was properly printed. However, Edmonds disclose that if the OCR cannot read the address, then the letter is rejected. (col 2: lines 3-4)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to verify whether the postal information was properly printed. Gendreau would be motivated to do so to ensure that the delivery cost can be correctly calculated.

Referring to claim 41:

Gendreau disclose wherein the verifier comprises a line scan camera for scanning the pieces of mail at a plurality of discrete points to create image data representative of at least a portion of the pieces of mail. [0037]

5. Claims 9, 18, and 38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gendreau in view of U.S. Pat No. 5,308,932 to Manduley et al.

Referring to claim 9:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a re-orientor operable to re-orient the mail as the feeder feeds the mail into the transport. Manduley et al disclose an orientor to orients a mailpiece in conventional manner. (col 3: lines 16-20)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to include a re-orientor to re-orient the mail as the mail is fed into the transport. Gendreau would have been motivated to

perform such step to ensure that the mailpiece is oriented correctly for address determination and shipping label application.

Referring to claim 18:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a step of serially feeding the piece from a stack of mail in an input bin. However, Manduley et al disclose serially feeding the mailpieces from a stack of mail in an input bin. (col 4: lines 16-18)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to serially feed mail pieces from a stack of mail in an input bin. Gendreau would be motivated to do so because the mail pieces in Gendreau's invention are already being fed serially and feeding mail pieces from a stack of mail in an input bin is well known in the arts.

Referring to claim 38:

Gendreau does not expressly disclose a re-orientor operable to re-orient the mail as the feeder feeds the mail into the transport. Manduley et al disclose an orientor to orient a mailpiece in conventional manner. (col 3: lines 16-20)

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made for Gendreau to include a re-orientor to re-orient the mail as the mail is fed into the transport. Gendreau would have been motivated to perform such step to ensure that the mailpiece is oriented correctly for address determination and shipping label application.

6. Claims 47, 56 and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gendreau.

Referring to claim 47:

Gendreau discloses sorting the packages by carrier [0034]. Gendreau does not expressly disclose sorting the piece according to the recipient's address. However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Gendreau to sort according to the recipient's address. Gendreau would have been motivated to do so to facilitate shipping of the packages.

Referring to claim 56:

Gendreau discloses that the system can handle mail pieces of various sizes [0037], [0039]. Gendreau does not expressly disclose a feeder configured to accommodate a mixed batch of mail having pieces of various size. However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Gendreau to have a feeder capable of accommodating a mixed batch of mail having pieces of various size since the conveyor and the computer system 18 is capable of shipping mixed size mail items.

Referring to claim 58:

Gendreau discloses that the system can handle mail pieces of various sizes [0037], [0039]. Gendreau does not expressly disclose a feeder configured to accommodate a mixed batch of mail having pieces of various size. However, it would have been obvious at the time of the invention for Gendreau to have a feeder capable of accommodating a mixed batch of mail having pieces of various size since the conveyor and the computer system 18 is capable of shipping mixed size mail items.

Conclusion

7. Examiner's Note: Examiner has cited particular columns and line numbers in the references as applied to the claims below for the convenience of the applicant.

Although the specified citations are representative of the teachings in the art and are applied to the specific limitations within the individual claim, other passages and figures may apply as well. It is respectfully requested that the applicant, in preparing the responses, fully consider the references in entirety as potentially teaching all or part of the claimed invention, as well as the context of the passage as taught by the prior art or disclosed by the examiner.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ROB WU whose telephone number is (571)272-3136.

The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri 8-5.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on (571)272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3628

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/R. W./
Examiner, Art Unit 3628

/John W Hayes/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3628